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ABSTRACT

This report documents and summarizes research findings on the influence of religion on the lives of U.S. adolescents. It examines recent academic research on religious influences during adolescence and reports findings from quality studies, published mostly in academic journal articles or book chapters. The report focuses on: "Levels of Adolescent Religious Behavior (religious involvement); "Physical and Emotional Health"; "Educational Aspirations and Achievement"; "Moral Development"; "Gender Role Development"; "Volunteerism and Political Involvement"; "Delinquency" (alcohol, tobacco, and drug use and sex behavior); "Parenting and Family Relationships" (family well-being and parenting practices); "Theorizing the Influence of Religion during Adolescence"; and "A Developmental and Cultural Approach to the Study of Religious Influence." The report concludes that an adequate account of religion during adolescence requires attention to intergenerational social bonds, changing family structures, valued practices and groups, community norms and proscriptions, and transactional relationships between parents, children, and peers. (Contains approximately 157 bibliographic references.) (SM)

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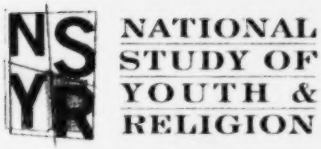
Religion in the Lives of American Adolescents: A Review of the Literature

by
Mark Regnerus,
Christian Smith and
Melissa Fritsch

A Research Report of the

NATIONAL STUDY OF YOUTH & RELIGION

Number 3



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by Mark Regnerus, Christian Smith and Melissa Fritsch

A Research Report of the National Study of Youth and Religion, Number 3

About the Authors – Mark Regnerus is assistant professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. Christian Smith is professor and associate chair of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Melissa Fritsch is department assistant at the Center for Social Research at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Cover Design: Sandy Fay, Laughing Horse Graphics, Quakertown, PA
Interior Design: Roxann L. Miller

Editors: Roxann L. Miller
Melinda Lundquist Denton
Theresa M. Rupar

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National Study of Youth and Religion
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
CB 3057
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3057

Website: www.youthandreligion.org
Email: youthandreligion@unc.edu

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Introduction

Researchers continue to document psychosocial influences of religion on the physical and emotional health and behaviors of U.S. youth and adults. In some cases, the magnitude of influence is staggering — among adults, going to religious services weekly provides a positive effect on lifespan that is comparable in magnitude to the negative effect of smoking a pack of cigarettes a day: about seven years (Hummer et al. 1999). In most cases, however, the direct influence of religion or religiosity is less substantial than this but still worth noting. The purpose of this report is to document and summarize research findings on the influence of religion on the lives of U.S. adolescents.

The direct influence of religion on many outcomes is substantial enough to be worth noting.

Social scientists studying adolescents are well aware of "religiosity effects" on youth's attitudes and actions. National datasets like Monitoring the Future, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health all have modest religion components whose measures are often included in statistical analyses. However, the choices of measures employed, the methods of modeling religious variables and the skills with which coefficients of religious effects are interpreted often fall short, bespeaking researchers' own limitations when it comes to understanding religion and its manifestations in people's lives. Religion's relationship with health and social behavior also is often minimized or ignored. Wallace and Forman (1998) note this as well, documenting that the U.S. Congress' 726-page report, titled "Adolescent Health," includes only two references to religion.

Nevertheless, significant influences of religion often can be documented despite poor measurement of religion. As measurement improves and more care is given to interpreting religious effects, developments in this field accelerate and the actual effect of religion on behavior is found to be more substantial than previously reported. Regardless of the reasons for this neglect, the lack of rigorous research specifically aimed at understanding religious influences shortcuts important advances in the field of adolescent health. This is partly because much empirical evidence exists arguing that behavioral patterns displayed (perhaps initiated) during adolescence have their sources in the family and from childhood. (That religious practice and family life often go together is well-established; see, for example, Wilcox 2001.)

This report seeks to glean from recent academic research on religious influences during adolescence and report findings from quality studies, published mostly in academic journal articles or book chapters. The term "quality studies" refers to those that do not appear to have flaws that would prevent us from applying them to the general pool of knowledge. Findings about religious youth outside of North America will not be reported on here. Neither will out-of-the-way analyses from sociological studies of, say, 10 religious youth group members or about teenage Pentecostal snake-handlers — these samples and topics may be of particular interest but simply are not of general interest and applicability to the lives of most U.S. adolescents. Additionally, this publication reports on relatively recent research whose connection with contemporary adolescents is more reliable than research dating even as late as the mid-1980s, whose subjects are now more than 30 years of age. Several exceptions are made to this pattern, however, where the study's age seems less important than the nature of its findings. There seems to be no avoiding the fact that this report will fail to discuss a number of important studies that deserve mention. It should also be apparent that the focus is more on academic journal articles than on books. Authors of important books concerning adolescence and religion such as William Damon (*Greater Expectations* and *Some Do Care*), Richard Flory and Donald Miller (*Gen X Religion*), and James Hunter (*The Death of Character*) — to name a few — are not featured here. They are, however, also worth reading and make important contributions to the project of extending our knowledge about religious influences on children and adolescents. Finally, this review refers to conservative, fundamentalist and evangelical religious believers. These

Despite poor measurement of religion, significant influences often can be documented.

are often ambiguous terms, and researchers often use different measurements for them. For the specific meaning intended and measure used in each case, please refer back to the specific article or chapter that our discussion is referencing.

Levels of Adolescent Religious Behavior

Contrary to some popular images, religion plays a significant role in the lives of many adolescents in the United States, according to a number of surveys and public opinion polls (see Smith et al. 2002, 2003). For instance, in the early 1990s the Gallup organization reported that some 76 percent of adolescents (ages 13-17) believed in a personal God and that 74 percent prayed at least occasionally (Gallup and Bezilla 1992). Data from the Monitoring the Future project suggest that the overall level of religiousness among U.S. adolescents is relatively high (Donahue and Benson 1995). According to those data, the percentage of high school seniors attending religious services weekly dropped from around 40 percent (1976-81) to 31 percent by 1991 but has remained stable throughout the 1990s. Additionally, nearly 30 percent of 12th graders indicated that religion was a "very important" part of their lives, a figure that has held steady since the inception of the project (Johnston, Bachman and O'Malley 1999).

Data from Monitoring the Future and other sources also suggest an important developmental component of adolescent religious involvement. In short, the frequency of attendance tends to decline between eighth and 12th grades (Potvin, Hoge and Nelson 1976; Benson, Donahue and Erickson 1989; Roehlkepartain and Benson 1993). In 1997, about 44 percent of eighth graders reported attending religious services weekly, as compared with 38 percent of 10th graders and 31 percent of 12th graders. This drop in attendance might reflect growing autonomy as teens mature. Among 12th graders, regular religious service attendance might be likely to result as much from individual volition as from influences of intergenerational transmission and parental socialization. At the same time, there are few age differences in religious salience. Moreover, a study of adolescents in Iowa found that while frequency of religious service attendance dipped during the high school years, levels of participation in other religious activities tended to rise over the same period (King, Elder and Whitbeck 1997).

In the 1990s, 76 percent of adolescents believed in a personal God.

Among adolescents, as among adults, religious involvement is patterned by gender and race. On average, girls are consistently "more religious" than boys — i.e., more likely to attend services weekly and to report that religion is "very important" to them — by several percentage points. Blacks are more likely than whites to attend religious services regularly (40 percent vs. 29 percent) and vastly more likely to indicate that religion has high importance in their lives (55 percent vs. 24 percent) (Johnston, Bachman and O'Malley 1999). Although much less is known (especially in comparative perspective) about the religious involvement of Latino and Asian-American adolescents, some data indicate that they, too, report greater involvement and commitment than non-Hispanic white youth (Benson 1993).

Religious Involvement

The sources behind the development of religious involvement in youth are several, though parents easily constitute the strongest influence. Some scholars go so far as to suggest that "religiosity, like class, is inherited" (Myers 1996: 858). Parent-child transmission of religiosity and religious identity is indeed quite powerful. But it's not inevitable. On the whole, mainline Protestant parents are having greater difficulty retaining their children within the mainline Protestant fold than are evangelical Protestant parents (Smith 1998). Religious socialization also is more likely to occur in families characterized by considerable warmth and closeness (Ozorak 1989). Mothers are generally thought to be more influential than fathers in the development of religiousness in adolescent children (Benson, Masters and Larson 1997; Bao et al. 1999).

Adolescent religious development is triggered by home religious habits and religious education.

Studies nearly universally find adolescent girls to be more religious — both privately and publicly — than boys. Ozorak (1989) suggests, in keeping with results from several national datasets, that polarization in religiosity occurs during adolescence. That is, the decreases (in religiosity) of somewhat or moderately religious youth mask the increases of the (fewer) very religious. In her study of 390 adolescents, she found parents' religious affiliation and practices related to all aspects of religiosity during early and middle adolescence, though much less so among older adolescents. Cohesive families, she found, curb this diminishing influence somewhat. Erickson's (1992) analysis of Search Institute data on adolescents found parents' religious influence on religious behavior to be minimal for boys but quite robust for girls.

Overall, his analysis suggests that "adolescent religious development is triggered by home religious habits and religious education, while the (direct) influence of both parents and peers is less important than previously suggested" (1992: 146). Gunnoe and Moore's (2002) research using data from three waves of the National Survey of Children showed that subsequent young adult religiosity was best predicted by peers' religious service attendance patterns during high school, ethnicity (African-American) and gender (female). Maternal religiosity and living in the South were also related to religiosity, but parenting style was not.

Scott Myers' (1996) longitudinal analysis of parents and — 12 years later — their adult children revealed that while one's religiosity is "determined largely by the religiosity of one's parents," it also is fostered among families where parents enjoy marital happiness, display moderate strictness, support and show affection toward their children and in households where the husband is employed and the wife is not. Perkins' (1987) study of college youth revealed that 69 percent of students with two highly religious parents reported a strong personal faith themselves, compared to only 39 percent of students with only one devout parent. A novel study of teenage twin girls (1,687 pairs) and their parents provides unusual opportunity to distinguish environmental or socialized development of religiosity from that which is "inherited" (Heath et al. 1999). In it they show evidence suggesting that black girls display considerably higher "heritability" of religious involvement and religious values in contrast to white girls or girls of other races or ethnicities. While still underdeveloped in its ramifications, this suggests that there may be a genetic component to the transmission of religiosity. Why it is more powerfully observed among blacks remains unknown, though a potential genetic trait is in keeping with their genetic tendency toward earlier physical maturation.

The quality of a teen's relationship with pastors and parents plays a role in explaining alienation from religion.

Most studies have focused less on parental influences on youth religiosity and more on characteristics of the youth themselves that are conducive to religiosity. Particularly since public religiosity appears to decline during adolescence, what factors stimulate or impede that from happening are of central interest. Dudley's (1999) longitudinal research on Seventh-Day Adventist youth revealed predictable factors related to adolescents' subsequent maintenance of regular attendance patterns — namely, intent to remain a faithful attender, parents' attendance patterns and integration into church day school. In an earlier study, Dudley and

Laurent (1988) concluded that the quality of relationship with pastors and parents, as well as opportunities for their own religious involvement, self-concept and the influence of peer groups and mass media each played a role in explaining alienation from religion in a sample of 390 youth.

Youthful attraction to cults is surprisingly understudied, due perhaps to its relative infrequency (despite occasional hype suggesting otherwise). In describing the personality profile of a youth susceptible to cult overtures, both Hunter (1998) and Parker (1985) list identity confusion, alienation from family members, weak social and religious ties and feelings of helplessness or powerlessness (external locus of control). Cult members are generally more apt to come from upper middle class homes exhibiting democratic parental authority structures. Typically, relationships with family decline precipitously prior to membership. A structured sense of belonging and an escape from perceived "normlessness" attract many recruits. Hunter suggests that 18- to 23-year-olds are most at risk for successful cult recruitment. Youth who are converted rapidly to more mainstream religions or religious traditions often are influenced by social pressures as well. Social bonds made possible through religion — whether traditional or "cult-like" — are attractive. Choosing a strong religious identity also is stimulated frequently by role models (Parker 1985).

Seventy-eight percent of adolescents incidcated that they have doubts about religion.

Most research about conversion focuses less on gradual and developmental conversion types and more on sudden forms, though the former types are much more common in most religious traditions. An historical study of adolescence and revivals in antebellum Boston documented evidence suggesting revivalists particularly targeted adolescents and fashioned their methods to provoke emotions that were popularly associated with youth (Schwartz 1974). Countering anti-revivalists' fears of unleashing pent-up inhibitions, the revivalists argued that youthful emotions are valid and constituted fertile soil in which true religious sentiments could root. The spiritual autobiographies of both distant past and present day tend to describe periods of youthful "wildness, corruption and indiscipline before the onset of (religious) conviction," as Thompson (1984: 140) depicts adolescent culture in colonial Massachusetts.

Religious "doubting" among adolescents was the focus of Kooistra and Pargament's (1999) study of 267 Catholic and Dutch Calvinist (Reformed) school students. First, religious doubting was common

— 78 percent indicated currently having doubts. Catholic school students displayed considerably more doubt than the Reformed students, who were higher on several religiosity counts. Among the latter, religious doubting was associated with adverse life events, conflictual family patterns and emotional distress.

King, Elder and Whitbeck (1997) assess religious involvement among rural Iowa and inner-city Philadelphia youth. The Philadelphia youth were much less likely to be involved than the Iowa adolescents: 5 percent of the former attended religious services more than once per week, compared to 29 percent of Iowans. None of the Philadelphia sample mentioned youth group participation; 20 percent of the Iowa sample did so. Nevertheless, the Iowa sample did exhibit common developmental traits of religiosity, such as declining average levels of attendance across adolescence. Girls were more involved than boys. More private forms of religiosity remained stable, as did overall participation in organized religious activities. The most consistently and intensely religious youth were distinguished by several factors: farm residence, self-identified as "born again" and having and identifying with religious parents.

Physical and Emotional Health

A disproportionate share of the recent research literature on religion and general health focuses on adults, especially older ones. Studies on religious influences on adolescent health — including emotional, physical and social aspects — are few in number and generally not of the quality found in the literature on delinquency, sex or education. Indeed, only one recent study focused explicitly on religious influences on the physical health and well-being of adolescents. Wallace and Forman (1998) explored religion's influence on healthy lifestyle behaviors among a large, national sample of adolescents. Their study revealed striking and consistent relationships between multiple measures of religiosity (including importance of faith and attendance) and health behaviors such as diet, exercise and sleep habits, as well as seat-belt use. More-religious youth consistently eat better, exercise more frequently, get more sleep and are more apt to use seat belts than less religious or non-religious youth. Differences on these outcomes across categories of religious affiliation (liberal, moderate or conservative) mattered less than did simply having a religious affiliation at all. Those adolescents without any religious affiliation reported higher frequencies of health risk behaviors. The authors conclude that religious expressions and behavior during adolescence promotes long-term physical well-being.

Many studies of adolescent emotional health have included

religion as a control variable rather than as an explanatory variable. Surprisingly few studies have been conducted on religion and suicide ideation among youth. The Search Institute's Troubled Journey research found suicide measures modestly (negatively) correlated with religious activity, religious service attendance and the self-reported importance of religious faith (Donahue and Benson 1995). Only slightly more common are studies of religion and self-esteem among youth. Several studies of adolescents have reported a modest positive relationship between various measures of religiosity and key aspects of self-concept: self-esteem, or the sense of moral self-worth and mastery, or the perceived ability to control personal affairs (Batson, Schoenrade and Ventis 1993; Bergin 1983; Donahue and Benson 1995). Religious communities might promote favorable self-images among youth by providing opportunities for positive reflected appraisals (e.g., within youth small groups or activities) and by encouraging cultivation of spiritual resources (e.g., faith and hope, belief in divine grace and benevolence) (Benson, Williams and Johnson 1987; Eklin and Roehlkepartain 1992).

Several studies have reported a positive relationship between religiosity and self-esteem.

A common problem in many studies of youth and health is the use of small samples of homogeneous youth. One such study of 109 college students reported a negative correlation between having a religious identity and experiencing depression using the Beck Depression Inventory (Koteskey, Little and Matthews 1991). Its magnitude, however, was smaller than that between family identity and depression. In their study of public school children in Baltimore, Varon and Riley (1999) found that youth whose mothers attended religious services at least once a week displayed higher overall satisfaction with their lives, more support from their friends and better skills in solving health-related problems even when controlling for race, gender, income and family structure. Adolescents' own reported frequency of attendance did not have significant additive influence on their emotional and social functioning.

Using an undergraduate sample, Shortz and Worthington (1994) examined young adults' recall of their patterns of coping with parental divorce. They found that religious individuals often attribute negative events to God. Students who believed that God's anger with them caused their parents to divorce were more likely to have turned away from their religious tradition. Those students who viewed the divorce as part of God's plan, however, seemed to positively employ religious coping mechanisms. In a study of Catholic

high school students in St. Louis, researchers found that while first-year students reported significantly higher personal religiosity than seniors, religiosity also corresponded with significantly lower distress and higher social adjustment (Mosher and Handal 1997).

Markstrom (1999) examined whether religious involvement was associated with psychosocial maturity in a split sample of black and white high school students from West Virginia. In her study, she found that "ego strengths of hope, will, purpose, fidelity, love and care" were each associated with various measures of religious involvement, most clearly for white students (1999: 205).

In a nationally representative study of U.S. adolescents, Harker (2001) documents that religious service attendance, prayer and importance of religion were mediating factors in reducing levels of depression among first- and second-generation immigrant youth but not for third-generation immigrants. Religious service attendance in general was higher among immigrant youth when compared to their native-born counterparts, and first-generation immigrants reported more positive overall well-being than native-born youth. She concludes that religion appeared to be an important part of positive adolescent well-being.

In their analysis of 60 textbooks about children and adolescents published between 1960 and 1988, Thomas and Carver (1990) assess the relative influence of religion on adolescent prosocial development. First, they found no evidence of increasing interest in the study of religious influences on adolescents. Fully 75 percent of the textbooks made no reference at all to religion. Second, they also found few studies of religion's influence on social competence (e.g., self-esteem, schooling, avoiding trouble). What research they do cite generally reports mild positive influence on social competence — largely via the pathway of religion as a means of social control. Nevertheless, they conclude that there are not enough studies in any one area of social competence to make conclusive evaluations. In a parallel review of research reported in five adolescent research journals, Weaver et al. (2000) report that only 12 percent of articles even considered religion as a possible influence, though this was higher than is typically seen in studies of adult mental and physical health. Among mental health topics, most research involving religion was concerned with youth suicide, linked to religion through its palliative influence on depression. Sorotzkin (1998) offers a unique evaluation of the tendency

Higher personal religiosity corresponded with significantly lower distress and higher social adjustment.

toward "perfectionism" in some religious adolescents. Perfectionism is more prevalent in some religious youth due in part to idealistic tendencies and dichotomous thinking. Youth whose parents emphasized socially acceptable behavior, or "keeping up appearances," as well as disapproved showing emotion between family members, were more apt to display perfectionism.

Educational Aspirations and Achievement

Parents shape their children's education not only through their direct resources (e.g., income, cultural capital) but also by passing on values conducive to achievement (Sherkat and Darnell 1999). The influence of religious practices, such as religious service attendance, typically is found to be positively related to desirable educational outcomes, though generally modest in magnitude. One notable recurrence, however, is the existence of both direct and indirect effects on academic progress, as well as evidence that suggests that these positive outcomes from adolescent religious involvement are not simply a reflection of "selection effects" — the likelihood that religious teens are also the kind of youth who would perform well in school.

Seventy-five percent of the textbooks on adolescents analyzed by Thomas and Carver made no reference at all to religion.

Research on the links between religion and educational attainment and performance only has recently begun to shift away from focusing on religious subcultures and their theological underpinnings for prescriptions or proscriptions about education and toward a concern with the influence that personal religiosity has on educational outcomes. Interest in religion and education was originally sparked by clear contrasts between Protestants and Catholics. Gerhard Lenski, in his path-breaking book, *The Religious Factor* (1961), cited Roman Catholic authoritarianism and anti-intellectualism as reasons for evident Protestant-Catholic differences in educational outcomes 50 years ago. At that time public education in America remained a stronghold (albeit a weakening one) of mainline Protestant authority and served as a cultural gatekeeper. That gap is no longer evident, due largely to the emergence and success of the Catholic schooling system. Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore (1982) and Coleman (1987) display strong evidence that public schools now lag behind Catholic schools in the average educational achievement of their students, most poignantly in cities and low-income neighborhoods. Over the past 20 years that gap has continued to widen.

The recent resurgence of interest in the relationship between religion and education no longer displays concern about Protestant-Catholic differences. Indeed, research conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s was primarily concerned with mapping educational distinctions within the family of Protestant denominations. Darren Sherkat and Alfred Darnell published a pair of studies using data from the Youth Parent Socialization Panel Study, a multi-wave research project that interviewed parents and children beginning in 1965 and concluding in 1982. They explored how parent's and child's Protestant fundamentalism shaped the latter's educational desires and outcomes. In their first study (1997), they showed that both conservative Protestant youth (a denominational measure) and youth who were biblical inerrantists held distinctly lower educational aspirations for themselves. They were also less likely to have taken college-preparatory courses during high school. Additionally, their parents' biblical inerrantism also contributed to students not taking college-prep courses. These two groups (of which there is significant overlap) also displayed clearly lower educational attainment when the sample was examined both in 1973 and again in 1982.

Public schools lag behind Catholic schools in average educational achievement of students in low-income neighborhoods.

Conservative Protestant parents (measured by either method) also held substantial indirect effects on educational attainment. That is, their children were more likely to hold biblical inerrantist views and less likely to pursue college-prep courses, both of which hurt their later educational attainment. The authors also pursue an explanation for these relationships. They believe it necessary to take seriously the public discourse of fundamentalist Protestants as a means to understanding their orientation toward secular education. While the authors place undue emphasis on the writings of a few obscure and atypical fundamentalists, the attempt to understand this group is worthwhile. Darnell and Sherkat suggest that fundamentalists evaluate choices differently than other Americans (including many religious ones) and may shun traditional understandings of the "good life" as involving significant material gain.

Their second study (1999) focused partly on parent-child differences on fundamentalist identity and how this shaped parental religious effects on children's educational attainment. Simply having a fundamentalist parent (by the measure of inerrancy) reduced the odds of a young woman taking college-prep courses by about 42 percent. If the daughter was not

similarly fundamentalist, this number increased to about 63 percent. Thus parents' fundamentalism had a stronger negative impact on college preparation for daughters who disagreed with their parents' religious beliefs. No similar negative influence was evident for sons. On later educational attainment, however, the relationship between parents' fundamentalism and their fundamentalist children's outcome was positive, especially among males. Such a relationship was not present for non-fundamentalist children of fundamentalist parents. While perhaps a bit confusing, this nevertheless points to interesting dynamics present in households where parent and child hold different religious orientations or beliefs. Though recent in their publication dates, the age of the studies' data should prompt caution in generalizing such findings to contemporary adolescent experience.

Beyerlein's (forthcoming) in-depth study of religious affiliations and educational outcomes tempers Darnell and Sherkat's findings by offering evidence that religious effects on the perceived merit of a college education varies substantially by what measure of conservative Protestant one uses. Using recent data, he found that self-identified (as compared to a theological or affiliation definition) fundamentalist and evangelical Protestants did not differ in their perceptions about the value of going to college. However, self-identified Pentecostals and (in accord with Sherkat and Darnell) those whose religious affiliation could be considered conservative Protestant each held distinctly lower perceptions of the merit of a college education than did other religious types.

Keysar and Kosmin's (1995) comprehensive study of educational attainment of U.S. women compared outcomes across 12 religious groups. While their choice of measuring "religious traditionalism" on a 12-point scale based on denominational identities is certainly subject to criticism, their findings deserve mention. Among younger women (ages 18-24) the range of those who had embarked upon higher education was substantial. The range peaked at 73 percent for young Jewish women and bottomed out at 26 percent among Pentecostals. Among older women, these two groups held the same position, though the range was even larger. In a more statistically rigorous test, Pentecostals, Baptists and Lutherans fared substantially worse than those with no religious affiliation, while Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, the "liberally" religious and Jews fared better. Among these young women, religious identification plays a key role in lifestyle choices such as early marriage and childbearing — each of which is understandably related to curtailing the pursuit of a college degree. This cultural role, they argue, is even more profound among older women.

Lehrer's (1999) research, which explores religious influence on education from an economic perspective, largely dovetails with the Keysar and Kosmin results. The influence of a fundamentalist religious background, Lehrer argues, is roughly of the same magnitude as that of having a mother or father with less than a high school education. For men, the negative effect of fundamentalist Protestantism occurred most powerfully at the stage of deciding whether to attend college. For women, it occurred at the stage of completing a college degree. No significant educational differences were found between mainline Protestants and Catholics.

Religious effects on the perceived merit of a college education vary by the measure of conservative Protestant one uses.

Finally, one study (Parcel and Geschwender 1995) that sought to explain the gap in childhood verbal facility between residents of the South and other regions of the United States pointed to fundamentalist religion as a risk factor for lower scores. Greater religious service attendance, on the other hand, corresponded with higher scores among girls, though not for boys. Characteristics of the maternal family of origin, especially if the respondent's mother was raised fundamentalist, played a role in explaining regional variations in boys' scores. The authors conclude by suggesting that boys might be more sensitive to various types of socialization influences, including religion, than girls.

That religious service attendance contributed to girls' verbal abilities in Parcel and Geschwender's study leads us to an emerging topic in studies of religion and education: the generally positive role of religious practice on education. Several recent studies have taken a research approach different than those reported on above by focusing on practice rather than theological perspectives or religious affiliations. Together these studies point to the importance of institutions and associations in providing means of integrating youth into traditional avenues of achievement and success. Education is but one of those outcomes, and religious organizations are but one of those avenues. Whether the nations' churches, synagogues and mosques provide, embody or reflect social capital is less important than is agreement on their often pivotal place in the educational socialization of youth (Coleman 1988; Portes 1998).

The influence of religious socialization via religious service attendance appears to be substantial for both black and white, immigrant and native. Carl Bankston and Min Zhou (1996)

reviewed the role of ethnic religious traditions in the social adjustment (including educational success and ethnic identification) of Vietnamese adolescents. The second strongest influence on attending Vietnamese after-school classes was religious service attendance. This practice also was related to consistent use of the language, bolstering recent immigrants' sense of ethnic cohesion. And even after accounting for a host of significant influences, religious service attendance was positively related to the adolescents' average grades, perceived importance of attending college and avoiding substance abuse. Diane Brown and Lawrence Gary (1991) came to similar conclusions in their study of religious effects on black educational attainment. Religious socialization was related to educational attainment for younger blacks, regardless of whether they enjoyed the positive influence of a two-parent home or a residence outside the central city. Its influence was strengthened, however, when the youth did come from a two-parent home. Curiously, black Pentecostals who experienced a more intense religious socialization displayed, on average, an additional year of education than those who reported less intense religious socialization. The authors suggest this reflects a trend toward increased Pentecostalism among well-educated blacks, a pattern not yet visible among white Americans.

Religious service attendance corresponds with higher verbal scores among girls.

Two studies by Mark Regnerus employing two different datasets pursued the research question of the general influence of religiosity on educational achievement and progress and also tested a hypothesis concerning the protective role of religion in at-risk neighborhoods. Using data from the High School Effectiveness Study, he (2000b) found that participation in religious activities was related to heightened educational expectations among 10th grade public school students. These more intensely religious students also scored higher on standardized math and reading tests even after accounting for a number of other reliable predictors of academic success. The hypothesis that religious involvement's effect would vary by level of neighborhood poverty was not supported. In other words, religiosity predicted academic success equally across neighborhoods. Beyond simple religious involvement, Catholic students (who are not Catholic school students) held even higher educational expectations for themselves. Religious involvement, Regnerus argued (2000b: 369), likely signified "a level of social control and motivation toward education."

A second study, using data from the National Longitudinal Study

of Adolescent Health, explored whether religious involvement enabled youth in low-income neighborhoods to stay on track in school. In this study Regnerus and Elder (2001) found that adolescents in low-income neighborhoods did not differ in their religious service attendance patterns from their peers in higher-income areas. However, their religious involvement was found to contribute much more to their academic progress than among youth in higher-income neighborhoods, even with adjustments for key risk and protective factors. Youth religious service attendance showed an increasingly positive relationship with academic progress as neighborhood rates of unemployment, poverty and female-headed households grew.

Religious institutions and associations are important in integrating youth into traditional avenues of achievement.

Additionally, Regnerus and Elder address the question of "Why religious service attendance?" Why not influence from one's own personal, private religiosity or religious identity? They argue that the ritual action of attending worship services, in contrast with theological differences that mark distinct religious affiliations and beliefs, is a process that operates independently of particular belief systems and organizational affiliations. Religious service attendance constitutes a form of social integration that has the consequence of reinforcing values conducive to educational achievement and goal-setting (King and Elder 1999; Regnerus 2000b; Regnerus and Elder 2001).

Yet why does religious service attendance matter more (for educational progress) for youth in high-risk, high-poverty neighborhoods? These authors suggest that religious organizations provide functional communities amid dysfunction and in doing so reinforce parental support networks and control, lending to such norms its considerable institutional power. Also, the paucity of participatory, social-capital-building institutions in disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities underscores the religious organization's pivotal place in fostering social and academic competence in such places. Religious organizations, they suggest, are no less functional in more advantaged neighborhoods, but they are just one of many functional communities established there — where social organization is established and law-abiding norms are expected and upheld (Regnerus and Elder 2001).

Finally, one of the most recent studies on how religious involvement shapes academic progress is perhaps the most comprehensive yet. Chandra Muller and Chris Ellison's (2001) study

employing two waves of the National Educational Longitudinal Study should stand as a definitive document for some time to come. In it they concern themselves with three primary questions: Is adolescent religious involvement related to family social capital? Is such involvement associated with academic progress? And finally, does such social capital mediate the relationship between religion and academic achievement?

Religiosity has been found to predict academic success.

To begin with, they find that religious involvement — measured as a summed score of attendance at religious services, participation in religious activities and conceiving of oneself as a religious person — is clearly associated with social capital in the family and in the community. Religiously involved students report higher parental educational expectations and considerably more discussion about school matters with parents. Such involvement was moderately associated with holding an internal locus of control — the notion that one can affect what happens to oneself — and with the level of "intergenerational closure," or the extent to which parents knew the parents of their children's friends.

Teens who were more religiously involved reported higher educational expectations for themselves. This relationship was partly, though not entirely, mitigated by accounting for parents' expectations and their peers' values. Similarly positive relationships were found between religious involvement and spending time on homework, avoiding truancy, receiving higher math test scores, taking advanced mathematics courses and receiving a high school diploma. Religious involvement appears to modestly benefit two distinct groups of students, the best and worst performers — stimulating the brightest and shielding those most at risk of academic failure. Reasons for such relationships include the possibility of more rigorous self-discipline and valuing persistence that might be reinforced in the students' religious community. They add that the results suggest "religious involvement might bridge family life and a wider set of intergenerational ties, providing a broader base of community structure and access to resources for some youth" (2001: 175). Access to positive role models is likely to be found in religious organizations and might serve to shape the values of their youth in prosocial directions. Such results, they add, might be the function of spending more time on religious activities, crowding out other potential influences.

Moral Development

The study of the development of morality and moral reasoning in children and adolescents largely has been conducted by developmental psychologists. The connection with religion, however, is made infrequently, the work of William Damon and a few others notwithstanding. Separating an understanding of moral development from one of religious development is not accomplished easily. Fowler's (1981) stages of faith development — arguably the most well-known articulation of religious development — constitute a process of making meaning out of life in which children, then adolescents, then adults, create loyalties to centers of values and fashion a "master story." The sources of such master stories are not detached easily from traditional forms of religion. Developing defensible and authoritative sources of morality apart from them is no simple accomplishment either (Taylor 1989).

The results from only a few recent empirical studies on this topic will be reported here. Bruggeman and Hart (1996) evaluated the likelihood of cheating, lying and moral reasoning among 221 religious and secular high school students. The youth participating had an incentive to cheat and/or lie — they would be given extra credit for class grade. Statistical tests between the groups revealed no significant differences in level of principled moral reasoning. Additionally, a full 70 percent of religious school students lied or cheated in the study, compared to 79 percent of the secular school students. Students who reported coming from devoutly religious families were not more likely to behave honestly but were more likely to be enrolled in religious schools. Curiously, level of moral reasoning was not related to choice of behavior in a situation of moral conflict. Another study of 118 public high school and 13 fundamentalist Christian school students revealed different results (Schmidt 1988). The Christian school students differed from the public school students on issues of money, body/health and strikingly on sexuality dimensions. The latter, interestingly, reported distinct awareness of minor character flaws. The small sample, however, restricts much generalizing about the comparisons.

Religious involvement is associated with social capital in the family and in the community.

Nucci and Turiel (1993), in a fascinating examination of religious rules and youth's concepts of morality, concluded that youth even as young as age 10 are able to hold conceptions of God that can be distinguished (and articulated) from conceptions of what is

morally "good." Even very religious youth (such as Dutch Calvinists or Orthodox Jews) could understand nonmoral religious rules as coming from God yet not binding outside their own religion. Finally, the authors document a declining tendency with age to employ "God's law justifications" for moral rules and a greater likelihood to argue from intrinsic features or social consensus.

Gender Role Development

A primary developmental task of childhood and adolescence is the internalization and practice of social roles. Among the most evident of these are gender roles, the social expectations and norms that often are accorded youth according to their sex. Religion historically has been considered an institution that promotes gender role "traditionalism," including motherhood for women and labor force participation by men. The polity of some Protestant denominations, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, prevents women from serving in certain important church offices. What is the relationship today between religious tradition, religiosity and the gender role identity of adolescents?

Among U.S. Muslim high school girls, greater religiosity and ethnic identity predict greater "femininity."

In keeping with these notions, most of the limited research on this topic (among adolescents) reinforces conventional wisdom about religion and gender traditionalism. Lottes and Kurlioff's (1992) analysis of the sex role attitudes of college freshmen found — as expected — conservative Protestants to be the most traditional on the gender role continuum. Jewish students were the least traditional. Canter and Ageton's (1984) study of a national sample of more than 1,600 youth found role-traditional males and females were more likely to be involved in both family and religious roles, but not other social roles, suggesting a coupling between religious and gender roles. A study of 28,000 high school seniors from the High School and Beyond project found traditional (or conservative) Protestant youth were less likely to expect to live autonomously single, due in part to their expectation to marry earlier (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1987). Jewish youth and those with no religious background were mostly likely to anticipate premarital residential independence. Research conducted on 10th and 12th grade Catholic students revealed higher than average expected fertility when contrasted with non-Catholics. Catholic girls expected, on average, to have 2.45 children (2.26 for boys), while non-Catholic girls expected to have 2.17 children (2.03 for boys). While not large, these differences

proved to be quite consistent. Those who attended mass regularly reported even (slightly) higher expected fertility. The influence of religion on fertility is not new, either. An examination of fertility rates in a late 19th-century Illinois city revealed greater birth spacing among "pietistic" women (Parkerson and Parkerson 1988). The authors argue that the pietistic religious tradition — among other traits — emphasized the need for intensive "Christian nurture" of young children, thus prompting women to space their children further apart than their counterparts from other religious traditions. The religion/gender connection is not restricted to Christianity. A contemporary study examining influences on the gender role identity of Muslim high school girls in the U.S. suggests that greater religiosity and ethnic group identity predicts greater "femininity" among the sample, reflecting the role of institutionalized Islam and traditional ethnic cultural norms at work in an immigrant population (Abu-Ali 1999).

In an interesting study using a very small sample, Lybeck and Neal (1995) interviewed approximately 15 conservative and mainline Protestant females from each of three age groups: 8- to 10-, 12- to 14- and 20- to 30-year-olds. They concluded that the fear of losing valued relationships causes many girls to silence their feelings. Among the younger group, the mainline girls were more likely than the conservative group to view themselves in a positive light and to view God in more loving terms. The mainline girls were also less likely to show strong concern with how God perceives their behavior. In each tradition, the 12- to 14-year-olds became more overtly afraid of peer judgment and evaluation and sought to silence themselves rather than appear stupid. The mainline girls were more apt to recover from that and regain their "lost voice" and confidence in early adulthood.

Voluntarism and Political Involvement

The surge in research interest in the concept of social capital — typically defined as involving social networks, norms and trust that facilitate cooperation for the collective benefit of all — has focused largely on adults and their civic participation rates (Putnam 2000). Less (but more than nothing) is known about youth. Rarer still are studies of how religion might or might not foster civic participation in adolescents. Elizabeth Smith (1999) analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth and found that among eighth graders, religious participation was unrelated to extracurricular participation. Only two years later, this had changed to the point where participation in religious activities was positively related to both extracurricular activities and greater civic virtue in students. They were more likely to volunteer and do community service, as well as develop normative

assumptions that such activities were important. Comparable relationships were found in the 12th grade. A less rigorous but still interesting analysis of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study revealed that adolescents' religious behavior and their positive perceptions of religion were linked with more frequent volunteer work, more time spent on extracurricular activities, parental involvement and positive perceptions about their own future (Trusty and Watts 1999). The authors qualify these findings by suggesting that adolescent religiousness might be a proxy for an underlying, unmeasured attachment to "society" — including the institutions and norms of parents, school and religion — that might account for the strong relationship.

Mainline girls are more likely than conservatives to view themselves in a positive light.

Youniss, McLellan and Yates (1999) analyze data from several reliable national data sources and conclude that youth who view religion as important are more likely to participate in community service, that such involvement enhances the likelihood that youth will adopt a religious rationale for service and that those who do service are neither social "nerds" nor religious "automatons." Indeed, nearly 74 percent of students who said religion was important to them were participating in monthly public service, compared to only 25 percent of their non-religious peers. This relationship remained stable across several decades of analysis. However, results from another national survey of teenage volunteering suggest that teenagers who were committed to religious and spiritual goals were no different in their levels of volunteerism than those who lacked such commitments (Sundeen and Raskoff 1995). This study suggests that religious youth might be more apt to volunteer in religious rather than civic settings. In terms of religion's influence on youthful beliefs about the U.S. political system, one study (Funderburk 1986) of a small sample of Florida youth found evidence suggesting that the longer and more intensely that religious beliefs are held, the more likely they would influence political attitudes, generally in a conservative way (i.e., support for the political system, laws and the police).

Delinquency

Contemporary research on juvenile delinquency began in 1969 and has been more contentious than has research on religion and other outcomes. This publication will attempt to document the evolution of this research here. It was in 1969 that Travis Hirschi and Rodney Stark published a provocative article titled "Hellfire

and Delinquency." It gave new life to a topic that had seemed all but dead. In sum, Hirschi and Stark suggested that religious practice and the fear of godly judgment had no impact on adolescent delinquency. Sociologists took notice. Even today this article remains a benchmark in response to which much subsequent work has been written, whether for or against.

In it the authors concluded from correlations that students who believe in the devil and the afterlife were no less likely to commit delinquent acts than those who did not hold such beliefs. Subsequent analyses soon emerged. Burkett and White (1974) replicated the study on high school students in the Pacific Northwest but suggested narrowing the theory to crimes against persons and property. A clear negative relationship emerged, they suggested, between religion and "victimless" crimes such as underage drinking and drug use.

About this time, Stark began to refine his theory and turned his focus away from the individual and onto the surrounding community. Articulated at length in his book *Religion and Deviance* (1996, with Bainbridge), Stark suggests that religiosity is related to conformity (or obeying community norms) only in distinctly religious contexts — among groups of people or in communities where the mean level of religiosity is high. This, they argued, would explain the contrast in conclusions drawn from Pacific Coast and Southern U.S. samples. Comparing new samples from Seattle and Provo, Utah, Stark, Kent and Doyle (1982) found no "hellfire" effect in Seattle but a strong one in Provo. This prompted them to adjust their theory and focus more on the piety of the community rather than the individual, taking this dispute into a distinctly sociological direction as opposed to a social-psychological one.

A negative relationship has been found to exist between religion and "victimless" crimes.

Tittle and Welch (1983) emerged to propose a "contingency" theory of religious effects on deviance. Building initially on Stark's "moral communities" model, they found that religiosity's inhibitory effects varied directly with the degree of normative ambiguity in a context. In other words, where agreed-upon moral guidelines are unavailable or unused, the importance of religious proscriptions on delinquent behavior is enhanced because "secularized" social settings lack the tools to produce conformity (Tittle and Welch 1983: 672). When religious youth are embattled against a secular culture around them, they will stand out from their peers. When everyone is agreeably religious, no distinctions between offender and non-

offender will be noticeable. This argument directly contradicted Stark's suggestion that intensely religious contexts reinforced prosocial behavior.

Peek, Curry and Chalfant (1985) moved the debate toward discussing religious influences over time. In so doing they drew attention to the concern that religion and delinquency are reciprocally related. In other words, while religion might reduce delinquency, it is possible that delinquent behavior might lead youth to devalue religion. Which causes which then becomes unclear. Yet what Peek and his associates were most interested in was the potential for heightened delinquency among youth whose religiousness has diminished over time — sort of "making up for lost time" model that emphasizes rebellion. Anecdotal evidence for such probably abounded but until then could not be corroborated with statistics. Their study mildly supported this hypothesis with respect to non-status offenses. Among other suggestions around this time were a neurological explanation for the spuriousness of the religion/deviance relationship, namely that some youth are neurologically predisposed toward the intense mental stimulation of crime and away from the presumed boredom of routine religious service attendance (Ellis and Thompson 1989).

As parent religiosity rises, child delinquency generally falls.

Cochran and several associates (1994) later examined the relationship between religion and deviance with an eye to what might be causing both religiosity and delinquency. They concluded that peer and family influences were paramount and that a relationship between religion and delinquency was really masking these other causes. The significance of religious behavior and the importance of religious beliefs on all outcomes except alcohol and drug use disappeared when social control variables were accounted for. Other research recently has concurred — Benda and Corwyn (1997) found in their recent study of 1,093 public school adolescents that general social control measures displaced most religious effects on status offenses. They additionally found more evidence for the reciprocal relationship between religiosity and delinquency. Indeed, the former predicted less delinquency only for particular outcomes, but a variety of delinquent behaviors were consistently related to a decline in religiosity. Powell (1997) detected a protective religious factor in analyzing violent students in a sample of high-risk (for violence) schools in a Southeast city. Likewise, respondents' attitudes toward religion were significantly correlated with nonviolent behavior. She suggests religious organ-

izations intervene by promoting mentoring relationships with at-risk youth, especially during developmental "windows of opportunity."

Recent research involving a national, two-wave study of adolescents revealed aggravating effects of parent/child religious dissimilarity on the delinquency of youth (Pearce and Haynie 2001). Among parent/child pairs where different religious affiliations were given, the child's frequency of delinquency was 11 percent higher than those pairs where affiliation was identical. A similar mismatch in importance of religion corresponded with comparably higher delinquency, suggesting that when parent and child differ in the importance of religion, the child will be 21 percent to 22 percent more delinquent than children who agree with their parents that religion is very important. Additionally, as parent religiosity rose, child delinquency fell. Parental prayer was also associated with lower delinquency.

Parental religiosity has both direct and indirect effects on youth delinquent behavior.

Using identical data as Pearce and Haynie, Regnerus tested Stark's (1996) "moral communities" theory of crime and delinquency using multilevel analysis (Regnerus 2000a). He found support for this perspective in the form of interactions between contextual (county-level) religious variables and individual religiosity. In one notable finding, self-identified conservative Protestant youth who resided in counties populated by large numbers of conservative Protestants displayed lower levels of delinquent behavior than other youth, including conservative Protestant youth living in counties containing fewer conservative Protestants. In related work using structural equation modeling, Regnerus (forthcoming) documented the importance of parental religious factors in shaping adolescent delinquency; specifically, he found both direct and indirect effects of parental religiosity and parental conservative Protestantism on levels of adolescent delinquent behavior even while controlling for the adolescent's own religiosity. For boys, higher parental religiosity proved to be an aggravating effect on delinquency.

In response to perceived trends toward higher rates of juvenile crime (fueled by the Columbine tragedy), a variety of organizations and movements have responded with all manner of ideas for curbing such trends. Among the more notable ideas are increasing family discipline, community policing, enhanced extracurricular involvement, a more efficient and equitable juvenile justice

system, a return to "shame" or negative sanctions, earlier age limits for prosecuting adolescents as adults, federal restrictions on violence levels in television and cinematic programming, popular boycotts of violent programming and its sponsors, and changes in parental child-rearing practices away from acceptable violence in boys. That several of these measures infer a return to or renewed emphasis upon a morally or religiously inspired socialization of children and youth toward acceptable behavior indicates not only a popular perception of the ability of religious solutions to affect juvenile delinquency but also an underlying sense that they are not currently carrying the day.

Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use

Religion affects drinking and smoking in many ways are similar to its effect on delinquency. Indeed, how religion affects alcohol and cigarette smoking — behaviors illegal only because the adolescent is underage — is often different than how it affects illegal drug use. Generally, religiosity shows modest protective effects and is considered to be a less important factor than, say, parent or peer drinking or age effects. Religious tradition is typically less important than is the extent to which adolescents have internalized or practice their religion. Perkins' (1987) study of college youth revealed a weak inverse relationship between drinking and personal religiosity. The influence of religion was found to be largely conveyed through parents: Whereas only 8 percent of Jewish fathers and 9 percent of Protestant fathers drank heavily, 31 percent of Catholic fathers did so, and when at least one parent drank heavily, the student was much more likely to report similar problem drinking. Forthun et al. (1999) report less alcohol use and later initiation among religiously conservative students in a study conducted at a Southwestern state university. Cochran and Akers (1989), drawing upon a survey of 3,065 adolescents in three Midwestern states, tested several existing theories about adolescent influence on alcohol and drug use. They found no evidence of an influence of "aggregate religiosity," or the average religiosity within each of the various school districts in the sample, in contrast to Stark's "moral communities" thesis. No influence appeared from perceived denominational teachings concerning youthful drinking, etc. Their findings supported the simpler thesis that primarily an individual's own religion matters, namely that religious youth are simply less likely to use either marijuana or alcohol when compared to their non-religious peers. A follow-up study by Cochran

Religiosity shows protective effects on alcohol, tobacco and drug use.

(1991) showed similar results: More devoutly religious youth displayed less proclivity toward using alcohol, marijuana and several types of drugs. The authors again suggest a more parsimonious model of modest but stable inhibitory influence.

A compelling and rigorous study of teenage twin girls (1,687 pairs) and their parents provided unique opportunity to distinguish environmental from inherited/socialized influences on teenage smoking and alcohol use (Heath et al. 1999). The authors found that, despite the higher levels of exposure to family, school and neighborhood adversity, black adolescents were less likely to start drinking or smoking when compared with those of other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Statistically, they show that the lower alcohol-use patterns of black youth were the result of their greater religious involvement and stronger religious values. Interestingly, their measurable patterns of public religiosity were not remarkably higher than white and other ethnic youth, but the influence of religion was substantially stronger for them. However, black youth were more likely than white and other ethnic youth to report that belief in God was very important (91 percent vs. 78 percent) and that turning to God in prayer when facing problems was very important (77 percent vs. 54 percent). Another similar study of 357 twin pairs revealed comparably interesting results: strong correlations between religiosity and belief that drug use is sinful. Fundamentalist and Baptist youth were more apt than mainline Protestant and Catholic youth to believe that drug use was sinful. These beliefs, together with level of peer religiosity, mediated the relationship between adolescents' own religiosity and their substance use. The inverse relationship between religiosity and drug, cigarette, marijuana and alcohol use were considerably stronger among young women than young men. Similarly, Burkett (1980) also found a connection between religion and beliefs about drinking that tended subsequently to inhibit alcohol use among religious adolescents. In Cochran's (1993) study of types of alcohol use, he found religiosity more strongly related to avoiding liquor than beer or wine. Interestingly, he noted that the effect of personal religiosity on alcohol use is considerably stronger when the youth is affiliated with a denomination (e.g., Baptist, Pentecostal) that typically takes a stronger stand against alcohol.

Religious youth are less likely to associate with peers who drink or do drugs.

Gorsuch (1995) reports that a quasi-experimental study found that a religiously based drug program curriculum appeared to lower substance use rates among students better than health- and

social-studies-based programs. He argues from a review of research that religious social control based primarily on punishment does not appear to reduce the occurrence of substance abuse and might even be related to its increase, as well as to antisocial behavior. Religiously based interventions can, however, help youth foster other use-reducing factors such as a positive peer group and family support. Studies comparing religious and secular treatment programs generally report comparable outcomes. Clergy and chaplains were reported to be valuable in assisting adolescents with alcohol or drug abuse problems by listening, talking and providing opportunities for shared experiences (e.g., prayer) during addiction struggles (Pullen et al. 1999).

The relationship between adolescent religion and drug use generally differs from that between religion and alcohol or delinquency, due in part to its status as illegal regardless of age. As with studies of delinquent behavior, many studies of drug use conclude that peer influence is the key predictor. If one's friends are drug users, then the opportunities and pressures to use drugs obviously increase substantially. How religion shapes drug use is less clear. Kandel (1980) reviewed existing research up to 1980 and concluded that involvement in religion was associated inversely with alcohol and marijuana use. As measures for peer influence improve, however, data on drug use are beginning to display fewer direct relationships with religion. Bahr, Hawks and Wang (1993) studied 322 adolescents in a Western state, applying a complex modeling approach to assessing religion's influence. They found that, after accounting for peer drug use, parental cohesion and adolescent religiosity showed no relationship with either cocaine or marijuana use, as well as general substance abuse. Parental monitoring, however, remained important. Their model favored a social learning theory wherein emphasis is placed on how youth come to model troubling behavior. However, a follow-up study by Bahr et al. (1998) showed different results. Controlling for peer drug use, respondents with more extensive religiosity displayed less marijuana and amphetamine/depressant use in a random sample of Utah youth. Compared to alcohol use, the relationship they found between religiosity and drug use was stronger. Outweighing each of these is the influence of religiosity on peer drug use — those adolescents who are involved in religion tend not to associate with peers who drink or do drugs.

In a compelling study of the influence of religiosity on black and white youth's drug use, Amey, Albrecht and Miller (1996) found that religiosity was much more likely to predict abstention in whites than in blacks. Analyzing data from the Monitoring the Future study, the authors note that religious affiliation (or its absence) was not influential on the drug use of black students.

Overall, however, black students were much less likely to use all types of drugs than whites. Thus, while black youth exhibit higher religiosity than whites, it does not serve as a deterrent to drug use. Both here and in other studies (including Foshee and Hollinger 1996) the aspect of parental or youth religiosity that was most influential in curbing drug and alcohol use was actual religious service attendance rather than more private forms of religiosity or particular religious affiliation.

Religiosity is more strongly related to avoiding liquor than beer or wine.

Finally, Burkett's (1993) study of Northwest U.S. high school students revealed interesting differences in the religion/alcohol use relationship by gender. For boys, parents' religiosity was not related to the adolescents' belief that drinking is a sin, the level of involvement with friends who drink or the youth's own drinking behavior. Only indirect effects were found through the types of friends the respondents were likely to associate with. For girls, however, stronger direct (protective) effects were found between parents' religious involvement and both beliefs about drinking and actual behavior, in addition to the indirect effects through friendship choices.

Sex

Unlike the generally modest relationship between religion and other risk behaviors, the influence of religion on sexual behavior is considered to be quite strong. Most competent research reinforces this conclusion. Yet research on religion and sex is not as extensive as that found on other outcomes, due in part to its sensitive nature and the difficulty of assessing sexual behavior simply by a mail or telephone survey.

There are numerous ways in which religion can affect adolescent sexual behavior: It can factor into attitudes and beliefs about contraception, permissible premarital sexual activities, pornography, friendship choices, etc. (Wallace and Williams 1997). So what is known with confidence here? First, it is obvious that the prevalence of sexual intercourse among adolescents, as well as the declining age of initiation, continues unabated (Laumann et al. 1994; Wallace and Williams 1997). Alongside this trend is one displaying increasingly earlier ages at menarche, especially among non-white youth. What role, if any, does religion play in explaining adolescent sexual behavior? Overall, the research suggests that multiple facets of adolescent religion — including attendance, the importance of religious faith and denominational affiliation —

typically correspond to lower levels of sexual activity, as measured by the age at which virginity is lost, number of sexual partners, frequency of sexual activity, etc. On average, religiously devout youth begin having sex later and have fewer sexual partners than less devout adolescents (Hayes 1987; Murry 1994; Thornton and Camburn 1989). This is not, however, the case among all youth. Religion's influence on sex is most prominent among white youth, less so among black youth. Little is known about its influence on Latino or Asian American adolescents.

Arland Thornton conducted two of the more reliable studies on this subject. In Studer and Thornton's 1987 analysis of Detroit-area data, they found a striking difference in exposure to sexual relations among frequent and infrequent religious service attenders. While 39 percent of unmarried teenage females who attended religious services regularly reported having had sexual intercourse, a full 65 percent of those who rarely attended reported the same. Additionally, the authors asked about birth control use and found that methods requiring a medical prescription were disproportionately less likely to be reported among those displaying higher religiosity. They concluded that a lack of open dialogue, information and support for using birth control followed from their results about devout teenage women. The threat of considerable cognitive dissonance associated with acknowledgement (or desirability) of sexual activity among devout young women is likely the cause of lower birth control usage among those who do report having had sex. Thornton and Camburn's 1989 study of sexual attitudes and behavior proves similarly helpful. In it they propose a theoretical model that suggests religious influences on sexual behavior as well as the opposite — that having sex lowers religiosity. Additionally, they employed data from both mother and child over time, focusing on possible generation gaps in attitudes and behavior. With respect to the permissibility of premarital sex, the data revealed that 32 percent of mothers approved compared to 65 percent of daughters and 77 percent of sons. Fundamentalist and Baptist affiliations showed more restrictive attitudes. Regular religious service attenders and those who held religious faith as very important also displayed more restrictive attitudes and behavior. Indeed, while 39 percent of these groups reported ever having intercourse, 78 percent of youth who never attended religious services reported likewise. The intrinsic form of religion — how important religious faith is to them — was not quite so influential. Here 50 percent of those for

Youth who never attend religious services have more than three times as many sexual partners as those who attend weekly.

whom religion was very important reported having had sex, while 70 percent who said religion was not important did so. Additionally, those youth who never attended religious services reported having more than three times as many sexual partners as those who attended weekly. The data also indicated a strong intergenerational transmission of religious involvement. Permissive attitudes about premarital sex are negatively connected with attendance at religious services. And while religious affiliation affected attitudes, it didn't affect behavior. They conclude by suggesting the mother-child gap evident on premarital sex is reinforced by — and contributes to — a similar generational gap in religiosity.

A comprehensive study by Cooksey, Rindfus and Guilkey (1996) using the National Survey of Family Growth found that white, conservative Protestant women (ages 15-23) became less likely to initiate sexual activity during the 1980s. While 55 percent of this subgroup was sexually experienced in 1982, that figure dropped to 39 percent by 1988. Black women from fundamentalist backgrounds long have exhibited a tendency to delay first intercourse. With respect to religious affiliation, this category was the least likely to have reported sexual activity. Other affiliations, including Catholics, saw a reverse trend (from 49 to 58 percent). Affiliation did not, however, notably influence the contraceptive decision-making of sexually active young women. Mott and colleagues (1996) found that regular attendance sharply reduces the risk of early first intercourse when adolescents report having friends who attend the same congregation; however, semi-regular attendance coupled with no attendance by peers has no effect on age at first intercourse. Miller and associates (1997) report that religious attendance is positively associated with age at first sex among females (but not males) and that this protective effect is stronger among females who report liking religious service attendance.

"Virginity pledges" can, under certain conditions, substantially delay sexual intercourse.

A recent groundbreaking study on "virginity pledges" suggests that, under certain conditions, such ceremonial promises can substantially delay sexual intercourse. Peter Bearman and Hannah Brückner (2001) used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to explore the effects of pledging abstinence until marriage. Overall, youth who took the pledge were much less likely to have intercourse than those that did not pledge. On average, pledging reduced the "baseline rate of time to sexual debut" by 34 percent

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(2001: 900). The effect of pledging also is not a function of selection effects. In other words, it isn't only those youth who were at low risk of having sex who did all the pledging. Religiosity displayed a significant and independent influence apart from pledging. There were, however, constraining conditions. It worked better among younger teens and less well among blacks. And pledging abstinence effectively delayed intercourse in schools where some, but not an abundance of, students also took the pledge. The pledge works, they argue, only in contexts where it is at least "partially non-normative" (Bearman and Brückner 2001: 859). That is, if too many students take the pledge, its influence becomes null. Only where it is counter-cultural (without completely alienating pledgers) is it effective, creating a "moral community." Additionally, female pledgers experienced an increase in self-esteem. Pledgers who break this promise are, predictably, less likely to have used contraception at first intercourse.

Research on religion and sex even has crossed the boundary between cultural and biological influences on sex. In a fascinating study of the interplay between religious behavior and human hormones, Carolyn Halpern and several associates (1994) concluded that religious service attendance can partly mitigate the strong influence of high testosterone levels on adolescent boys' sexual behavior. They compared four groups of boys — those who displayed high testosterone levels and a high level of religious service attendance, those with low levels of the hormone and high attendance, those with high testosterone and low attendance and those boys low on each count. At the earliest waves of testing, they found lower sexual activity among the high testosterone, high attendance sample than among even the low testosterone, low attendance group. An even larger gap appears fully three years after measurement, where the latter group displays 10 percent more non-virgins than the former group. Curiously, they found that average approval of premarital intercourse regularly exceeded approval of masturbation. On most outcomes, religious attendance was more pivotal than the importance of religious faith, suggesting that institutional involvement rather than personal significance is the key influence.

One of the more compelling research questions that remains largely unanswered, it seems, involves the intersection of religion, race and sex. That is, it has been documented that black youth are, on average, more religiously devout than white youth. This is the case for both public and private religiosity. Given that, why is it that black youth — especially males — also display consistently early transitions to sexual activity — a finding reported in many studies (Bearman and Brückner 2001; Marsiglio and Mott 1986)? Furthermore, black teenagers typically lose their virginity earlier

than white teenagers, and the relationship between religiosity and sexual behavior is much weaker than among white teenagers. This has remained the case for over 20 years of research conclusions (Benson, Donahue and Erickson 1989). In a nationwide sample, Billy and associates (1994) found the expected link between religious attendance and virginity status, but only for black and white females and not for males. Using panel data on a large, nationwide sample, Bearman and Brückner (2001) found yet a different pattern: Religiosity (gauged by scores on a composite measure) delayed sexual debut among whites, Latinos/as and Asian Americans, regardless of gender, yet had no effect among blacks of either gender. In a cross-sectional study of U.S. males, Ku and colleagues (1993) reported that frequency of attendance at age 14 (a retrospective measure) was related to delayed first intercourse among non-black males only, with no effect on black males. In her study of black females, Velma Murry (1994) reports a significant relationship between religious service attendance and late coital initiation. Indeed, 57 percent of early initiators reported regular religious service attendance, compared to 85 percent of late initiators. However, that nearly 60 percent of early initiators attend religious services weekly gives some indication of the weak overall relationship between religion and sex among black youth. Bearman and Brückner (2001) found that only black male teens did not experience a decline in self-esteem following loss of virginity.

Only black male teens did not experience a decline in self-esteem following loss of virginity.

Roger Rubin and Andrew Billingsley (1994) pursued one residual question surrounding the high black teen pregnancy rates. They examined results from the Black Church Family Project, a study of 635 black churches in the northern United States. Surprisingly, only 28 percent of the churches reported at least one program directed at adolescents. Fewer still were youth programs that focused on sexual issues. They concluded that adolescents, especially at-risk and urban youth, were underserved among religious youth work. Thus the mystery deepens.

A second research question that has received little study to this point is the relationship between religion and sexual development in adolescents. Equally sparse research exists that broaches the role of religion (through parenting practices, etc.) in the development of sexual orientation. With respect to homosexuality, what has been documented with some repeated success is a negative relationship between some religious affiliations and sentiments

about homosexuality. William Marsiglio's (1993) study of adolescent boys' attitudes toward homosexual activity and the concept of having gays as friends reinforced this. Eighty-nine percent of adolescent boys held negative attitudes toward homosexual activities, making analyses of variance in that outcome difficult. Having a gay person as a friend was considerably less objectionable, however. The category of self-identified "born again, evangelical, or charismatic Christians" was modestly negatively related to the idea of befriending a gay person. Religiosity, however, was unrelated to it. Marsiglio concluded that religion was a poorer-than-anticipated predictor.

Contested research on the efficacy of sex education also touches the study of religion. Whether school-based sex education actually curbs precocious sexual behavior or augments it (or is simply unrelated) is a compelling question. Marsiglio and Mott (1986) found that adolescents who reported regular religious service attendance habits were less likely to have taken a sex education course than those youth who appeared less devout. But when the authors sought to predict sexual behavior (or rather, its absence), they found that regular religious service attendance was a far more influential factor than was sex education. The recent rise in popularity of oral sex as a means by which youth can maintain a "technical" virginity (Lewin 1997; Remez 2000; Schuster, Bell and Kanouse 1996) also signals that research on sexual activity lags considerably behind adolescent trends. Indeed, one study's conclusions suggested virgins in serious relationships were no less likely to have had oral sex than non-virgins (Werner-Wilson 1998). Additionally, white youth appear more likely than black youth to substitute oral for vaginal sex (Smith and Udry 1985) as a substitution or delay mechanism. The relationship — if any — between religion and oral sex has not been examined.

Permissive attitudes about premarital sex are negatively connected with attendance at religious services.

Regnerus (2001) used national data on youth to conduct a preliminary assessment of the relationship between religion and several topics concerning sexuality: adolescents' knowledge about sex, parent/child communication about sex and parental misgivings about discussing sexuality with their adolescent(s). He documented a consistently negative relationship between religious service attendance and frequency of parent/ child conversations about sex. Results also indicated that devoutly religious parents (by several different measures) are more apt to treat conversations about sex as

opportunities for the transmission of values than as a forum for providing information about sex and birth control. In the same study, youth who display considerable private religiosity, as well as the children of conservative Protestants, were less likely to score well on a quiz concerning pregnancy risks.

In sum, multiple studies suggest a protective effect of religiosity and certain religious affiliations, although the nature and extent of racial/ethnic variations in religious effects remain unclear. Moreover, work in this area has often been based on small or localized samples, cross-sectional data, antiquated measures of affiliation and limited religious measures in general, with little or no attention to the effects of parental religion or religious contexts or the possible pathways (e.g. family relations, peer groups, etc.) through which religiosity might affect sexual debut.

Parenting and Family Relationships

Much research has reinforced the common sense notion that parents and their own religious practices are among the strongest influences on the religious behavior of adolescents. Some of that research has been outlined above. But what about religious parents as parents? Parental influence is manifested directly through socialization — from modeling behaviors to commanding them — but also through such mechanisms as the quality of relationship between parent and child, the autonomy parents accord children, the style with which they parent (e.g., authoritarian, authoritative, democratic) and their influence on their children's friendship selection and/or retention, among other means. While little is documented about some of these relationships (such as religion and friendship selection), a considerable literature exists about parental religion and child discipline and quality of family relationships.

The family unit itself — and particularly the nuclear family — is often considered a sacred structure within U.S. Christianity, particularly so among evangelical Protestants. Promoting the ideal of family and healthy relationships within them is the subject of broadcast radio programs, small groups and countless books. Church-sponsored weekend marital getaways are planned and promoted to enhance marital satisfaction with subtle sexual undertones. The marital pair is an important unit, and a family is often considered a natural, expected evolution for married couples. A study using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth found that young women from a fundamentalist or sect-like background were nearly twice as likely as mainline Protestants to marry during their teen years and more than twice as likely as Catholic women to do so (Hammond, Cole and Beck 1993).

Religious participation during adolescence did not appear related to early marriage. What is the research evidence concerning religion and adolescents' experience of family life and their parents' behavior toward them? Much of the research on parenting and family concerns the uniqueness of conservative or evangelical Protestants, especially their commitment to traditional forms of childrearing and child discipline.

Family Well-Being

One of the most comprehensive and long-term studies of the influence of religion on family relations focused on mothers and their relationships with their children across 26 years of data. Pearce and Axinn (1998) find evidence that the more important religion is to a mother, the more likely her child was to report a higher quality of relationship with her. This form of private religiosity was more important in predicting mother-child closeness than was religious service attendance. Additionally, mother-child match (or similarity) in the importance they accorded religion was associated with reports of higher-quality relationships from both mothers and children. And when 18-year-olds attended services in a fashion comparable to their mothers, the latter report significantly better relationship quality a full five years later. A study of Mormon youth showed that children enjoying emotionally supportive relationships with their mothers were more likely to increase in private religiosity (e.g., religious salience) over time and that this mother-child connection contributed to public religious practices almost as much as family religious practice (Litchfield and Thomas 1997). Similar research on rural Iowa youth documented a comparable effect — children who perceived their parents to be accepting of them were more likely to have internalized their parents' religious beliefs and practices (Bao et al. 1999). Mothers were especially influential and sons more likely to display strong religious transmission effects.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Chandy, Blum and Resnick (1996) found in their study of adolescent children of parents with histories of sexual or alcohol abuse that youthful religiosity served as a protective factor against long-term adverse outcomes. Indeed, perceiving oneself as religious was the most powerful predictor in their model of resilience. Brody et al.'s (1994) study of black two-parent families in rural Georgia suggested that religiosity was linked with higher levels of marital interaction quality and co-caregiver support for both mothers and fathers and also with lower reported levels of marital conflict and inconsistent parenting practices (among mothers). How well this relationship holds among families of different races/ethnicities — and in more urban settings — is unclear. Yeung, Duncan and Hill's (2000) study of

fathers in intact families revealed that fathers' time spent attending religious services appears to be beneficial for children's school outcomes but was not found to alter sons' earnings or daughters' probability of a nonmarital birth. Whether this generally positive finding is due to a paternal concern about moral socialization or simply about spending more time with family members is difficult to ascertain.

In an article documenting types of interaction problems found among some devoutly religious U.S. Christian families, Josephson (1993) describes three types: the enmeshed, the rigid and the cold family. The enmeshed family is characterized by over-involvement in each other's lives, and parents go to great ends to keep children from any distress. They see the world as sinful and dangerous and believe it's their role to shield their children. In the rigid family, any expression of self is considered sinful. Standards of conduct must not be questioned and are valued above relationships. Finally, the cold family emphasizes self-renunciation and links the expression of feeling and emotion with disrespect toward authority. External contentment and tranquility should be evident.

Parenting Practices

As mentioned above, the crux of research on parenting practices revolves around the issue of parenting style and child discipline. It has been consistently documented that conservative Protestant parents are more apt to spank their children than other religious types. Few if any studies dispel this. Curry's (1996) work on the stated moral equivalence of various objectionable behaviors among conservative Protestant adults further supports the notion that such parents take a more intense interest in the behavioral socialization of their children throughout adolescence. Ellison and Sherkat (1993) found in their analysis of General Social Survey data that such conservative Protestant parents disproportionately valued obedience in their children. This appears to be a priority that does not change much over the course of adolescence. They also concluded that members of conservative Protestant denominations are much more apt to hold negative or pessimistic beliefs about human nature. Such perspectives on human nature and views about punishment of sin were the strongest predictors of attitudes toward corporal punishment, while when these are controlled for conservative Protestant affiliation has no direct effect on such attitudes. In a follow-up study of data from the National Survey of Families and Households, Ellison, Bartkowski and Segal (1996) report a similar positive association between theological conservatism and spanking frequency. The authors caution against drawing conclusions about a relationship with child abuse, because studies of this nature focus on the effects of mild to moderate physical punishment rather than

more severe forms. Nelson and Kroliczak (1984) concluded from their study of 3,000 Minnesota children that the parental threat that God would punish youth who "are bad" was not a tool used by powerless parents but that such a threat does appear to correspond with self-blame and obedience in youth.

Conservative Protestants are more likely to hug and praise their children than are those from less conservative traditions.

Wilcox's (1998) analysis of data from the National Survey of Families and Households detailed a more complex story than had been generally articulated. While he too found conservative Protestants tended toward more physical forms of child discipline, he also reported that conservative Protestant parents were more likely to hug and praise their children than were parents from less theologically conservative traditions. A modest positive relationship also was found between religious service attendance and praising and hugging school-age children but was not found among parents of preschoolers. The study concluded that membership in a conservative Protestant church was less important for the outcome of interest than was identifying with conservative religious ideology. Conservative Protestant parenting practices, Wilcox concludes, display both authoritative and authoritarian traits. Using data from the National Survey of Families and Households, Ellison, Musick and Holden (1999) found the effects of maternal corporal punishment on emotional problems and antisocial behavior of children to be significantly less harmful for children of conservative Protestant parents.

A study using a smaller, less representative sample (Gershoff, Miller and Holden 1999) found no differences among mainline and conservative Protestants, as well as Catholics, Jews and those with no religious affiliation, on the frequency of eight types of discipline. Only on spanking did conservative Protestants stand out from the rest. Twenty-nine percent of such parents reported spanking their children three or more times per week, compared to only 5 percent of mainliners and 3 percent of Catholics. Conservative Protestant parents were more apt to emphasize instrumental benefits of corporal punishment; indeed, this attitude mediated the association between this religious identity and their frequency of spanking. All parents in the study agreed that moral and prudential transgressions warranted corporal punishment more than social transgressions. It appears, given their results, that conservative Protestant parents use spanking as a backup when other methods fail.

Finally, Gunnoe, Hetherington and Reiss (1999) examined 516 parent/child sets to assess whether parental religiosity predicted

more or less effective parenting behaviors and subsequently better or poorer child adjustment. They conclude that maternal and paternal religiosity was positively related with authoritative parenting style, though mothers were found to be both more religious and more apt to report authoritative parenting than fathers. Mothers' (but not fathers') religiosity was linked with less authoritarian parenting. Parental religiosity also proved to both directly and indirectly (through authoritative parenting) promote adolescent social responsibility, an outcome consisting of honesty, self-control, obedience, trustworthiness, etc.

Theorizing the Influence of Religion During Adolescence

Most of the studies described here are examples of "direct-effects" research, wherein some aspect(s) of religion were found to have an independent effect on the outcome of interest net of other potentially important independent influences. Such direct effects are indeed the most satisfying for interested researchers. They are obvious proof that religion matters. But the absence of direct religious effects is not proof that religion does not matter. Indeed, understanding all the ways religion can affect behavior — child, adolescent or adult — is not a simple task. Because, as noted above, religion obviously shapes parenting behaviors, the role of religion in one's life often can begin at birth. And when religion is one of a number of early and consistent sources of behavioral motivation (along with biological and personality factors, etc.), finding evidence of its influence later in life is not always easy, though it has been there the entire time. With direct effects — when religion appears to be a key distinguishing characteristic between those who don't, say, get drunk regularly versus those who do — documenting and understanding religious influence is fairly straightforward. With indirect effects, the influence is more difficult to detail. Take for instance a fictional study in which religious service attendance and subjective religiosity is found to lack any direct effect on reckless driving in late adolescence, net of a number of other variables like parental monitoring, level of autonomy, time spent with friends, etc. To establish that there is no religious influence at all, one would need to have confidence that religion has no bearing on the extent to which parents monitor their children, the freedom they're given, the types of friends teens choose and the amount of time they're allowed to spend with them. Other research suggests that religion — especially parental religion — affects each of these, suggesting that the influence of religion on reckless driving is not absent, but rather indirect. That is, religion might influence the extent of parental monitoring or a teenager's choice of friends and then these in turn affect the likelihood of reckless driving. Thus

religion is said to have an indirect effect on reckless driving via its influence on friendships and parenting practices.

Understanding that religion can shape adolescents' behavior in a variety of ways, some indirect, is only part of understanding how and why religion motivates them. Simply (and sometimes not so simply) documenting statistically significant religious influences does not, however, move us closer to understanding the reasons why religion is influential. While it's beyond the scope of this paper to engage this question fully, some hints are called for here. Most research on religion and adolescents suggests religion is largely about social control. It makes adolescents not do something they otherwise might have done. There is considerable evidence backing this up, plenty of which has been shared within these pages. When it comes to risk behaviors like drinking, drug use, sex, etc., religion does appear to protect youth or modestly distinguish between those who participate in those behaviors and those who refrain. Religion is about motivation to refrain, then. This is in some situations inarguable. But what about religious influence on parenting practices? Volunteering? Family satisfaction? Here is where a multi-faceted theory of religious influence becomes necessary. Wallace and Williams (1997) argue that for adolescents, religion is a secondary socialization influence (family being the only primary one), along with schools and peers. Religion then affects beliefs, attitudes and behaviors through the mechanisms of social control, social support and values/identity. The authors are correct in suggesting that family is "the first source of socialization into the norms and values of the larger society" (Wallace and Williams 1997: 460). However, they classify religion as a domain separate from family that shapes the family. They wisely suggest "greater attention needs to be given to the ways in which the primary socialization of children and adolescents within the family context is shaped by religion" (1997: 461). Parents for whom religion is important, they argue, might attempt to shape the other domains of socialization (e.g., peers, school) to correspond with their religious beliefs. Yet they still suggest religion is its own domain, possibly even competing with these other secondary socialization influences. Overall, however, Wallace and Williams point out that religion has been largely ignored in understanding adolescent health outcomes and that their model suggests religion is largely indirect in its influence. Understanding the mechanisms (e.g., social control, support, values/identity) that religion works through to shape behavior is key.

The absence of direct religious effects is not proof that religion does not matter.

Smith (2003) takes a somewhat different approach in understanding the motivating power of religion in the lives of youth. Like Wallace and Williams, he emphasizes the possible casual processes at work. Focusing on the positive, constructive influence of religion, he argues for nine distinct yet connected factors or pathways through which religion affects adolescents. Grouped three apiece under the headings of moral order, learned competencies and social/organizational ties, these pathways include: moral directive, spiritual experiences, role models, community and leadership skills, coping skills, cultural capital, social capital, network closure and extra-community skills. Some of these, however, are more direct (i.e., unmitigated or irreducible) than others. Taking the perspective that "there is something particularly religious in religion, which is not reducible to non-religious explanations," Smith (2003: 19) sheds fresh light on the matter and in doing so articulates what many sociologists of religion argue every day — that religion itself motivates human behavior. This occurs sometimes through other mechanisms, like the potentially tight-knit community norms found in religious organizations and sometimes in a more unmediated fashion, like when the moral pronouncements of one's religious beliefs call for youth to return kind treatment to their peers — even when undeserved. Smith's arguments differ from Wallace and Williams (and numerous others) in that the latter suggest primarily indirect effects, mediated largely through socialization mechanisms. Smith, on the other hand, suggests that in some situations religion motivates adolescent behavior directly — that religious belief and experience are the stuff that prompt youth to act. Some students of religious effects are in fact quite reductionistic, suggesting that religion pushes youth toward "conformity" with social and legal norms or else influences youth to associate with people (e.g., family and friends) who hold such conformist standards (Bahr, Hawks and Wang 1993). It is the decision to conform, however, that prompts youth to choose one action over another. This reliance on social control and social learning theories of adolescent behavior and the reduction of religion within them remains the most popular approach in studying religious influence during adolescence.

A Developmental and Cultural Approach to the Study of Religious Influence

Building upon both the reports of results above and this too-brief discussion of theories about religious influence, this publication concludes by articulating a developmental approach to the study of adolescents and religion to accompany the cultural approach with which many sociologists of religion are familiar.

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When it comes to understanding religion and its influence on other attitudes and behaviors during adolescence, it is important to account for both the role of culture and human development, seeking to understand why religion (in its various manifestations) might or might not affect behavior and to account for the possibility that religious influences themselves vary across the span of adolescence. As Ozorak (1989: 448) suggests, "A model of religious development in adolescence should be grounded in the process of maturation, especially in cognitive changes, but it should also weigh the influences of the parents and their chosen religious organization (if any) against the more diverse influences of peers."

The two — culture and development — should be kept in joint focus. Developmental trajectories occur within cultures and subcultures and often differ between them. U.S. adolescents come of age in decidedly different cultural and subcultural contexts while sharing similar sources of macro-cultural influence. While exposure to such powerful cultural phenomena as MTV, Hollywood and popular music touch the lives of most U.S. adolescents, subcultural distinctions nevertheless abound, affecting some but not others. These more proximate phenomena influence the development of teenagers within their ranks. Such subcultural influences might include, as examples, the educational expectations found among the working class, in rural areas and among religious conservatives; pro-marital norms found throughout the Bible Belt; ideas about civic duty and responsibility that differ from small town to large city; a more intense individualism on the West Coast; the sexual mores of Roman Catholics and other religious conservatives; and the diverse musical tastes (gospel, contemporary Christian and all manner of secular styles) of adolescents. Each of these is an example of a subcultural distinction that might alter developmental paths among adolescents.

Although Grotevant (1998: 1097) suggests, "a full understanding of adolescence requires consideration of the rapidly changing individual in ongoing interaction within dynamically changing, multilayered contexts," his chapter focuses on an examination of the changing individual in interaction with religious contexts. To his credit, Grotevant includes belief systems and "activity settings" such as schools and religious institutions among his "multilayered contexts." Yet, as with most developmentalists, religious belief systems remain "unpacked" as an influence. Restrictions are typically chalked up to religious conservatism without attempting to understand the sources and reasons that religious conservatives give for such restrictions.

Religion can be an irrelevant activity setting for youth. But it can constitute much, much more than that. It can vary in the lives of

teenagers from a compulsory hour-per-week period of intense boredom to the setting that sprouts an entire network of friends to an all-encompassing lifeworld of belief, behaviors and ritual practices. Researchers are seldom able to measure these dynamic differences accurately. To conflate all these into one "subcultural influence" would be a mistake. Its effect on relationships (parent-child, peers, intimate relationships), the development of identity during adolescence, emotional and physical health and prosocial and achievement-oriented conduct in school, work and daily life can vary widely. The ideological context in which adolescents develop should never be overlooked. Adolescents' social contexts include the meaning and belief systems in which they and important and influential others live, and in which sizable variance occurs regarding how much adolescents internalize or reject the value systems around them. In sum, the religious contexts in which youth live — whether they participate actively in them or not (of course participation does matter for religious socialization) — clearly differ in quality and intensity, and so also would be profitably thought to differ in their developmental repercussions.

It is important to understand religious influence at each life stage.

An adequate account of religion during adolescence, then, requires attention to intergenerational social bonds, changing family structures, valued practices and groups, community norms and proscriptions and transactional relationships between parents, children and peers, among other concerns. Adolescence draws from the stages of development that precede it and continues to affect later life stages. Understanding the nature and extent of religious influence at each life stage, then, is an important task. This literature review is intended as a modest step toward that end.

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